

URSI MATTERS

Educating the next generation of urban leaders.

New Directions

Greetings!

I find myself leading the Urban and Regional Studies Institute again for one last year and one last time. As some of you recall, I served as Chair for eight years before redirecting my energy to my classes and my research. At the end of this academic year, I will be moving on to my next chapter in life.

My time with the Institute, close to 30 years, brought about many changes for me both personally and professionally. It's true, nothing stays the same. Many people have moved on both within their lives and beyond their life here on earth.

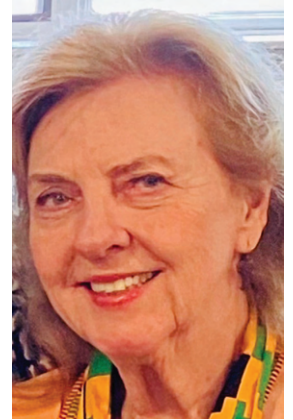
I've seen hundreds of students in my classes, whom I enjoyed tremendously. Some, I count as friends today. Most students arrive in class from the place I appreciate the most. That place is, regardless of their socio-economic background, age, ethnicity, gender or where they call home, a place open to possibilities and exploring ideas. What a privilege that it has been to share that place with them.

Since I started, we have said goodbye to a number of faculty, including Bob Barrett, our founder. My connection to him was

strong. He was one of my professors when I was working on my master's degree in Urban and Regional Studies. He was a mentor when I was working in the city management field, and I was his last faculty hire before he passed on. Working with him on the other side of the desk as well as the other dedicated, talented faculty members and staff has been a career-enriching experience. As I leave, the Institute remains in capable hands of committed, student-oriented faculty who have their eyes on the future to address the changing needs of local and regional government but remain rooted in the founding principles of the Institute. So, as I bid you adieu to pursue my next chapter, I hope to see you in the promise of the future.

All the best!

Miriam



*Dr. Miriam Porter
Urban and Regional Studies
Institute Director*

URSI Alumni, Tanya Ange, Rises to the Top

Alumni Tanya Ange recently became the President of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). In this position she leads a profession that impacts the daily lives of people throughout the world. City and county managers oversee the operations of cities and counties from public safety to public works, advise elected officials and implement public policy.



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URSI Alumni, Tanya Ange, continued



She received her master's degree in urban management in 2006. During her studies, she worked as Dr. Porter's graduate assistant who remembers her as being a dedicated, hard working and

engaging student and assistant. There was no doubt in Dr. Porter's mind that she would excel in the profession. Tanya stated that the course content in local government management and planning is something she uses every day. She has served in city/county roles in 3 different states and feels her education has helped her carry out the demands of each position.

Her main goals for the ICMA during her term as president are to lift the city management career up as a noble profession and to hire an executive director.

In her current position as county administrator, Tanya serves as the chief executive of the Washington County organization. She has been there since August 2020.

Prior to her appointment to Washington County, Ms. Ange served for four years as deputy city manager for the City of Boulder, Colorado. In that role, Ms. Ange oversaw management of the City Manager's Office, including its equity-focused initiatives, as well as departments such as Communications and Engagement, Community Vitality, Finance/

Budget, Human Resources, Innovation and Technology, Library and Arts and Transportation and Mobility.

Prior to her service with the City of Boulder, Ms. Ange was an assistant to the city manager (2006-2009) and then a deputy city manager/chief of staff (2009-2016) for Mankato, Minnesota, a 44,700-person community in southern Minnesota.

Ms. Ange is a credentialed manager through the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). In addition to her master's degree in urban management in 2006 she has a bachelor's degree in Recreation, Parks and Leisure Services (2000), both at Minnesota State University, Mankato. In addition to being the current ICMA President. Ms. Ange has served on several other ICMA committees throughout her career and is currently chair of the Performance Management Committee. She served on the ICMA Executive Board as the Midwest vice president from 2013-2016. She serves as board member for the National Association of County Administrators. She has also completed leadership training with the Harvard Senior Executive Institute in 2018, Leadership ICMA in 2012 and the Senior Executive Institute at the University of Virginia in 2011.

The Urban and Regional Studies Institute and Minnesota State University have every reason to be proud of this alumni's remarkable accomplishments.



FACULTY UPDATES

Raymond Asomani-Boateng

Dr. Raymond Asomani-Boateng (AICP), is a Professor in the Urban and Regional Studies Institute at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Raymond's research focuses on sustainable urban development, indigenous African urban forms waste management, urban agriculture, and planning ethics.

His research has been published in top journals, including *Journal of Planning Education and Research (JPER)*, *Case Studies in Transport*, *Journal of Environmental Systems*, *Habitat International*, *Third World Planning Review*, and *Journal of Urbanism*. Raymond reviews for the *Journal of Planning Education and Research (JPER)*, *Habitat International*, *Public Transport*, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research (IJURR)*, *Wetlands*, *GeoJournal*, and *African Geographical Review*.

Amongst the articles he has under peer review, one focuses on the ethical dilemma among planning professionals in Sub-Saharan Africa using Ghana as the study. This contributes to the knowledge of ethical choices among planning professionals and contributes to the professional code of conduct amongst planner in the Global South.

Raymond currently teaches Planning Law, Planning the Built Environment, Planning Theory, Environmental Planning, and Sustainable Communities. Raymond serves on department, college and university committees and serves as chair of his department search committee. He is the founder and director of Minnesota State University, Mankato Ghana Study Abroad Program. He is a recipient of Minnesota State University, Mankato Faculty Research Grant, Faculty Improvement Grant, College of Human and Social Sciences Frontier Forum Award, and Minnesota State University, Mankato Global Citizen Award.



Paul Prew

In the Spring of 2024, Paul Prew joined the Urban Studies faculty. Since then, he has contributed to the introductory, in-person classes, including Sustainable Communities, Introduction to the City, and Community Leadership. He continues to teach a course for American Indigenous Studies called Indigeneity and Environment that examines the unique sovereignty challenges indigenous peoples face and the contributions of indigenous populations to addressing environmental issues.



Dr. Prew's PhD is from the University of Oregon where his interest in the environment grew. In 2019, he edited and published a chapter in the Oxford Handbook of Karl Marx. The chapter focused on the looming environmental crises due to our inherently expansionary society. He also published two intellectual biographies of Karl Marx as chapters for two separate collections of economic thinkers. Other research includes a recently published article with Dr. Jose Lopez, Woo Jang, and Lu Yan called "The Geography of Hate Crime in California, 2015-18." in the journal *Springer Nature Social Sciences*. The article investigates the geographic relationships of hate crime in California. Based on his experiences teaching the difficult topic of climate change, he participated in a workshop at the Upper Midwest Association for Campus Sustainability conference in Fall 2024. The workshop was titled, "Educating between Harsh Reality and Unfounded Optimism."

With his environmental background, he is very interested in strengthening Urban Studies' commitment to sustainability. In addition to his courses related to sustainability, he serves as the co-chair of the University-wide Environmental Committee. In his non-profit work, he has facilitated the collaboration between the Living Earth Center and the university to bring the annual Earth Conference to campus. The Environmental Committee hopes it will be a lasting partnership to draw attention to sustainability issues in the local community and greater southern Minnesota region. Based on his background in environmental issues and global "development," he looks forward to applying his expertise to help students understand a path forward that reduces our burden on the environment while improving the standard of living for our communities, especially those who have been left the furthest behind.

Beth Wiede Heidelberg

Dr. Beth Wiede Heidelberg was awarded a faculty research grant over the summer of 2024 to study the impact of dark tourism on local government policy and planning in the United Kingdom. This work will be featured in the Minnesota State University, Mankato's *Today Magazine* in fall of 2024. She has developed a partnership with the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) in London to help reach communities across the UK and develop a relationship with communities managing their dark tourism issues.



In addition to this research, featured in an accompanying article, she has also been busy with recruiting efforts to attract more students to the URSI program. Recruiting efforts have highlighted the need for planners and city administrators who are 'street-ready,' able to walk into a City Hall or consulting job with the skills to perform the job. She is also working on a software conversion for all of her online courses, updating each session with HD images and interactive elements, to ensure students are getting the highest quality online experience possible.

URSI MIXER WITH GEOG & ANTH

On September 26, Urban Studies hosted a social mixer with the Department of Anthropology and Geography. While enjoying hummus and artichoke dip, students from Geography, Anthropology, and Urban Studies shared their experiences and socialized with each other. Faculty from the programs were able to take a little time away from their busy schedules to relax with colleagues, students, and friends. Over the course of the afternoon nearly twenty folks were able to stop by to visit. Urban Studies and Anthropology/Geography have a great deal of disciplinary synergy, and the Geography Colloquia series features several topics of interest to Urban Planners and Administrators. We look forward to deepening our relationships in the future, and would like to follow up the social with more collaborative endeavors in the future.



Meet Our URSI Graduate Assistants



I am Connielia Mensah from Ghana. I earned my Bachelor's of Science in Human Settlement Planning from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in 2021. I'm in my first year of graduate studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato, pursuing a master's in Urban Planning. My goal is to become a transport planner after obtaining my master's. I'm currently focusing on transportation planning.

What drew me to pursue a master's within the Urban and Regional Studies Institute at Minnesota State University, Mankato was the emphasis on applied learning in real-world situations. This includes a credit module for a hands-on internship that will provide me with experience in urban planning. Additionally, the program allows me to earn a Geographic Information Science (GIS) certificate upon completion, which will further enhance my skill set.



My name is Jess Long and I am a new Urban Planning master's student here at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Before attending here, Jess received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). While studying Geography she authored her thesis *Women's Landscapes and Communities in Deadwood, South Dakota*.

As a current graduate student here, she will be focusing on historic preservation. At UNL, Jess worked with undergraduate students through teaching Physical Geography and Civic Engagement courses. Continuing her passion for teaching, Jess is serving as a Teaching Assistant to Introduction to the City with Dr. Porter. Along with classes, she is serving as the President of Students of Urban and Regional Studies Institute (SURSI) Club. She and her fellow officers are planning guest speakers and events that will help engage students within the Urban and Regional Studies Institute program.

Varvara Potochevska - Historic Preservation Project in Spain

During spring semester of 2024, I was enrolled in Dr. Beth Wieldel Heidelberg's course "Historic Preservation Policy and Field Methods". This course inspired me a lot and gave me an idea that I wanted to seek for opportunities in this field. That's why, after returning home from Minnesota State University, Mankato, I started to brainstorm about what are the next steps that can be completed to keep moving in the preservation field. Luckily, I found out about the existence of a nonprofit organization (NGO) called, "European Heritage Volunteers".

Basically, this NGO provides practical hands-on restoration projects along with educational activities all around Europe. Because of their generosity, I got to go to Europe for 2 weeks in here this past November, I was part of the course in furthering

excavation and documentation of the ex-mosaic factory Palauet Nolla in Meliana (a Valencia community), Spain.

Before arriving, my aims were to see how the process of restoration went



first-hand and see the social aspects of it. I wanted to work with local identity because in small towns the impact of the work is much more visible. I think that at the end, my requests were covered.

Together with 12 other participants from around the globe, we went to the site 5 days a week. I really liked that together with some physical work, we had a rich educational experience. On opening day, we had an excavation crew, where lots of locals came to see and ask questions about the process. We had lots of talks with experienced restorers and attended some lectures with various staff that we worked with earlier, along with taking a tour around Meliana. Over the weekend the NGO decided to take us on a tour to other towns, including Valencia. This was a nice balance of everything. Instead of going to a local restaurant for lunch on one of the days, the NGO cooked an enormous cauldron of paella for all of us. This was a powerful dive into their culture that I would not have gotten to participate in, had I just been an ordinary tourist coming for a visit.

One of my biggest personal highlights was that Palanuet de Nolla was not just a restoration of the building itself, but it was restoring the whole identity of the place. Before 2010 no one knew about the place. Now it has been transformed into one of the symbols of the town and a factor of local pride.



RESEARCH

Ghosts in the Old World: URSI Faculty Beth Heidelberg investigates dark tourism practices in the United Kingdom

A plane crashes into a small community, catapulting a small rural community into the international spotlight. A ship hits an iceberg and sinks, sparking international fascination for over 110 years. The notoriety of some events attracts people to pay their respects and see the places that will help them comprehend the world of the people involved and wrap their heads around the tragedy. Visitors come from all over the world to “see where it happened.” This is dark tourism. Dark tourism is a curiosity for researchers and the public alike. The link between local tragedies, dark tourism and urban planning and policy isn’t obvious, but vital to successful tourism in communities looking for additional revenue streams and seek alternative methods to invest in community amenities and infrastructure.

Imagine your community having an asset that could draw thousands – if not millions of tourists each year. They would come to the community, purchase gas, eat at local restaurants, stay at local hotels, buy souvenirs and local crafts at local shops, grab ice cream at locally owned shops. The income from this can sustain a community’s budget, even giving them money to improve amenities and infrastructure, and holding a surplus for emergency spending. It’s worth the money to market the primary tourist destinations, because that investment could result in an amazing payoff for the residents.

When that major tourism draw is attached to a local tragedy, though, the ability to market the sites and court tourism becomes challenging for the local governments and citizens who would benefit from the resulting revenue. Communities struggle with the idea of marketing a tragedy. To capitalize on a tragic event, especially if there are people still living there that were affected by it or knew the victims, would be ghoulish and distasteful, and bring up major ethical issues. Yet tourists come to communities famous for a tragic event, whether the community likes it or not. Dark tourism doesn’t go away just because it is controversial.

Some of the findings were expected, such as local governments deep respect and sympathy for the victims and their families. In Lockerbie, Heidelberg encountered residents who recalled the night of the crash with such clarity it was almost as if it had happened the week before. The horror of it still appeared in their mannerisms and faces as they described not being able to contact loved ones when the phone lines were cut off and the struggle to get water to the scene to

help fire crews, and how perplexing it was to see debris strewn around the southern end of the city.

In Southampton, Heidelberg had a chance to discuss the development of the Titanic exhibit at the SeaCity Museum, and how local families donated artifacts recovered off the bodies of their relatives who died in the disaster to help tell the story of Southampton and the impact the disaster had on the whole city. A recovered pocketwatch indicated the time the Southampton victim submerged in the water. A set of keys, a menu, a blanket shared to a ship’s greaser from a woman in Lifeboat #4, all donated from family members to tell Southampton’s role in the tragedy.

Walking around Southampton, traces of Titanic’s history are scattered and not always easy to find. An original building like the White Star Line offices being used for other purposes, small memorials that look like a footing for something else, a memorial hidden in burned-out church ruins, and larger, more Renaissance-inspired memorials in the north part of the city, far from sites directly associated with the disaster. Southampton’s Titanic history isn’t cohesive outside the SeaCity Museum exhibit, but much of it is there if visitors look for it.

But there was an unexpected, yet significant finding. Namely, dark tourism means something different in the United Kingdom than in the United States. In the United States, smaller communities have a very short timeline of history, so tragedies that occur there have a significant impact and leave an indelible mark on the city’s history. In the United Kingdom, there are centuries of history, and even very small communities like Lockerbie, have several layers of tragedy and dark events.

Lockerbie, Scotland, for instance, has a history dating back to Neolithic flax production and organized by around 900 CE, is a mere 2 miles from the 1593 Battle of Dryfe Sands, where Clan Johnstone and Clan Maxwell battled for power, with 700 soldiers lost in the process. During World War II, the Hallmuir Prisoner of War camp held 450 German and Italian prisoners of war only 1.5 miles from the city. The Pan Am 103 flight thrust Lockerbie into the international spotlight, but it isn’t their only claim to notoriety.

Likewise, Southampton is internationally known for the Titanic. But in Southampton’s history, dating back to Roman occupation, they have experienced the Black Plague, which



Memorial to the Titanic’s lost crew members, Holyrood Church Ruins Southampton, England

Research con't



Council Hall Memorial Window to the PanAm 103 bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland, featuring flags from all the countries who lost citizens in the attack

killed roughly 25% of its population. Another plague on 1665 killed roughly 1,700 people. In World War II, the German Luftwaffe targeted Southampton's industrial area, where Spitfire aircraft were produced, and their Civic Centre. The Blitz on Southampton killed 630 people and injuring thousands.

The finding from Lockerbie and Southampton beg the question of how local governments should work with multiple layers of dark tourism, some which draws an international tourism market, others that are more locally famous but not well known outside the community. This investigation created a new dimension of dark tourism research, and may impact the premise that dark tourism is most successful (and better embraced by the community) when combined with an educational component.

Miriam Porter Goes to Vienna

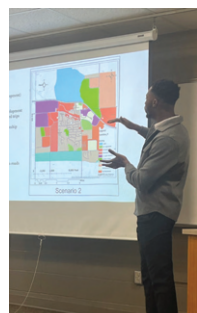


Dr. Porter was asked to present her research on disaster preparedness, management and recovery in countries with developing economies at the

Constructed Environment Conference at the Universitat Wien in Vienna, Austria in April of 2024. In addition to presenting her own research, she served on a panel with two other experts on the constructed environment to discuss cutting edge solutions in these ever-changing times. She stated that the conference was rich in information and did a fantastic job of showcasing the exquisite city of Vienna.

Dr. Porter has continued to facilitate students' preparation for the field. She supervises internships and the graduate capstone class, Studio. URSI students are sought after for both and continue to perform with excellence. She has also assumed the role of Institute Director this year.

Graduate Studio 2023 Becoming Street Ready Professionals



The graduate Studio is the capstone course for second year graduate students. The course is taught by Dr. Miriam Porter. It serves to transition students into the professional realm in preparing them to become street ready professionals and enter the workforce ready to embrace their careers.

Student teams take on projects for external clients. They study the issue, research the circumstances and provide their findings and recommendations in a comprehensive report. The teams' research and findings are presented to their client.

In 2023, we had three external clients. Graduate students Aaron Mumford, Maryse Lemvi, Brandon Malecha and Michael Yeboah worked with the City of Eagle lake on their Land use Plan; Graduate students Anna Nichols, Bennett Hanson, Jack Wheeler, and Sodjo Guenole worked with the Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota to identify their economic contribution to the Mankato Metropolitan Statistical Area and; Austin Cook, Catie Brown, Sydney DePrenger, Youssef, El Saadi and Mireille Ghassan worked with the City of Kenyon Depot Park redevelopment plan.

Without exception our clients have been pleased. One example was from Jaci Sprague, Vice President of Development for the Children's Museum. She wrote "I want to highlight that each member of the team is not only a pleasure to work with but also exceptionally well-prepared for the challenges and opportunities that arose... Their contributions have undoubtedly made a lasting impact...".

Our faculty and students are proud to be of service to organizations positively impacting our communities. If you have a project that you'd like to have considered in the future, please contact Dr. Beth Heidelberg - beth.heidelberg@mnsu.edu.

The field study helped shape a broad survey developed by Heidelberg and the LGiU team, set for distribution for LGiU's 400+ member communities across the United Kingdom, to look at trends in dark tourism impacts to local governments across the UK. With the help of statistician Dr. Scott Granberg-Rademacker of MSU's Political Science program, there will be a deeper understanding of how communities in the United Kingdom manage dark tourism, providing insight and best practices for communities around the world who are struggling with their own dark tourism involvement. This survey will be followed by a similar survey of United States communities for a comparative analysis. These studies are the largest-scale studies of community dark tourism practices to date.

Beth Heidelberg visits the Tower of London



OTHER NEWS/INFORMATION

How to Participate in European Heritage Volunteers?

How to Participate in European Heritage Volunteers? Go to European Heritage Volunteers webpage (www.heritagevolunteers.eu) and click on the link that says “European Heritage Training Courses”, this will bring you to a drop down menu, and click on the one that says “Training Courses 2024”. This will bring you to the projects that are past, current or in the future for 2024. New dates and projects for the year 2025 will be available sometime in February. It is recommended that you apply as soon as a project is posted that you are interested on joining as they have an application process (including: filling out a form, resume, writing a letter on given topic and possible completing an interview) along with paying a participation fee (this is only if you are selected. You will be responsible for getting to your destination on your own, however, the program host will provide accommodations, food costs and program costs.



URSI Student Club

The Urban and Regional Studies Institute (SURSI) Club is a student organization for those who are in the Urban Studies program or are interested in the field. SURSI welcomes graduate and undergraduate students to: network and find mentors, develop leadership skills and professional experience, and get off campus to study cities and communities outside of the classroom.

This semester SURSI has had guest speakers visit to speak to students about internship opportunities and career paths available after graduation. Next semester the club is planning a field-trip to Minneapolis and a project that will share information about planning and community engagement to high schoolers.

URSI WANTS YOU!

If you or someone you know is seeking an advanced degree for promotion, to make a career change, or to cross-train in a secondary skill or certification, URSI’s application process is open and accepting new applicants for Spring 2025 and Fall 2025! Encourage your colleagues to become part of the URSI family.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics says urban planning and management are growth areas, be part of an exciting, dynamic career and make a real difference in communities around the globe!

For Details, Application Materials and Admission Requirements Go to our URSI web-page (<https://hss.mnsu.edu/academic-programs/urban-and-regionalstudies/>) or scan the QR Code on the right



SAVE
the
DATE

for the
URSI REUNION
APRIL 25, 2025
MANKATO, MN
more information to follow



Minnesota State University, Mankato
A member of Minnesota State



Professionals are persons who put the interests of their organization above their own. – Fricano



IN MEMORY OF DR. RUSSELL FRICANO

Russell Fricano passed away on November 7, 2024, in Buffalo, New York after battling pancreatic cancer for a year. He was an Associate Professor, bringing to MSU's Urban and Regional Studies Institute (URSI) over 20 years of professional urban planning experience to augment his teaching in higher education. His work included the training and assessment of urban planning practitioners and students, research and community outreach.

Dr. Fricano previously served as a Section Head for the Los Angeles County (California) Department of Regional Planning (LADRP), an organization which provides planning services to the nation's most populous county. He consistently applied his experience in teaching and training students and planning practitioners. Prior to his position at URSI, Dr. Fricano worked as an instructor in Environmental Planning and Policy, Planning Theory, Urban Economics and Planning Studio at Alabama A&M University. At URSI, he taught Long Range and Strategic Planning, Urban Design, Transportation Planning, Program Evaluation, Urban Analysis, Community Leadership and Urban Studies Studio.

As an urban-planning educator, Dr. Fricano believed that planning practitioners and students should be well rounded in knowledge, skills and applications. He developed a diagnostic tool to evaluate planning practitioners' knowledge of over 30 topics in the urban planning field. Dr. Fricano successfully prepared practitioners for the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) Exam, the certification exam in the urban planning field. For students, Dr. Fricano stressed the interrelationships of various facets of urban planning and brought an applications approach to his courses. He developed exercises and capstone projects providing students with an opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills to real-world problems.

He will be remembered as a faculty member who always rose to the needs of students and the Urban and Regional Studies Institute, generously giving his time and skills to whatever was needed.

His memorial service has been held.